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WASHINGTON

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January 9, 1970

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Dear Dick:

Thank you for your memorandum of November 13 asking whether the content and format of NIEs on Soviet military strategy and capabilities are fully responsive to our needs here in State. I have been impressed by the amount of information and the quality of the analysis contained in the current estimates on Soviet military forces, and by the very thoughtful and carefully organized manner in which the material is presented. The points which I have to make, therefore, are not fundamental criticisms but rather suggestions for possible refinements which I hope will sound reasonable to you and your staff.

I believe that different levels of readership do have differing needs and that consideration should be given to preparing short "summary estimates" for the top policy makers. These would be more comprehensive than the "Conclusions" as now written but much more condensed than existing estimates, and I will come back to this a little later. Adoption of "summary estimates", in addition to providing a more useful paper for policy people, would permit you to make the basic NIE more detailed and complete. Since the latter won't normally be going to top policy makers, there should be less occasion in the drafting to strive for brevity at the expense of a full discussion of important or controversial points. To the extent feasible, the basic estimate should contain not

The Honorable
Richard Helms,
Director,
Central Intelligence Agency.

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State Dept. review completed

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only the analysts' conclusions but also an indication of the evidence on which such conclusions are based. In the discussion of major weapons systems (ICBM's, ABMs, SLBMs, etc.) greater use of historical information would assist the reader in placing the latest information in perspective. Annexes could be used occasionally to provide background information on major issues, such as the differing analyses of what the Soviets are up to with their multiple re-entry vehicles for the SS-9. Also, in order to point up statistical summaries and forecasts, perhaps greater use could be made of maps, charts and graphs.

We would also like to see a greater effort made in the basic estimate to evaluate Soviet doctrine and strategy, attempting to derive implications from what we know about their hardware programs if more direct evidence is not available. To the extent that fundamental differences exist within the community, these should be brought out and discussed. I recognize that this is a very difficult matter, and that Soviet doctrine is normally handled in a separate estimate, NIE 11-4, but to the extent that such discussion can successfully be incorporated in these revised estimates, it might obviate the need to issue a separate NIE 11-4 as frequently as in the past.

As to the "summary estimates" for top policy makers, we envisage these as papers to be written after the completion of the basic estimates. They would be comprehensive and self-contained condensations of the basic estimates, giving an over-view of major Soviet weapons systems and describing significant changes in Soviet forces. Where important differences of interpretation exist, they would provide a reasonably full explanation of such differences and the reason therefor. Some information of a general nature on Soviet defense expenditures should be included. In the case of NIE 11-3 and NIE 11-8, on Soviet strategic defensive and offensive forces respectively, the "summary estimates" should be written with a view to their being combined into a single paper. In this way, policy makers will have in one document the intelligence community's assessment of the main elements of information on Soviet

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strategic forces which must be taken into consideration in calculating the strategic balance between the US and the USSR--the type of calculations which figure prominently in our continuing discussions of US options for the SALT negotiations.

Furthermore, although it is not directly relevant to the estimative process, you might consider working out a procedure with the Pentagon so that a brief statistical summary of US forces, including forward projections drawn from the OSD Five-Year Defense Program, could be circulated as an attachment to this "summary estimate" in order to give the reader a basis for comparing US and Soviet forces.

I hope that these ideas will prove useful.

Sincerely,



William P. Rogers

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